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XXX

TWO EARLY AMERICAN TUNES: FRATERNAL TWINS?

(A STUDY OF A HYMN FAMILY)

BY

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TWO EARLY AMERICAN TUNES: FRATERNAL TWINS?

(A Study of a Hymn Family)

by Ellen Jane Porter, M.S.M., Mus. Doc.

The Southern Harmony is the only tunebook I have found which contains both of my two favorite early American folk hymns: *Wondrous Love* and *In All the World Below*, the latter to the tune known as *Captain Kidd.* Both have the same metric structure, each has a flowing, singable tune of its own, but at least two hymnologists have confused the tunes, and I wish to set the record straight.

The writer of Part II of *Companion to the Hymnal* (Methodist) has accepted and passed along a minor error in terminology first perpetrated by George Pulley Jackson, the dean of researchers in the field of American folk hymns. It is quite natural that one should accept the word of this scholar to whom we owe so much, whose several books restored the glory of the "white spiritual" (Jackson's term) which, but for him, would probably have been dimmed, possibly extinguished.

I fell in love with the *Captain Kidd* tune when first I discovered it in my copy of *The Missouri Harmony.* I used it in lectures and articles to illustrate the beautiful way in which old secular ballads had been borrowed and transformed as hymn tunes; I cited the words as evidence that the poets of the southern uplands were aware of the unspoiled beauty of their mountain home (this was before I found the hymn in an earlier tunebook produced in New England) — and I arranged the tune for chorus, for organ,[1] and for handbells. The only other contemporary use of it that I know of is in the Robert Shaw Chorale recording, *Sing to the Lord. Wondrous Love,* however, which was used in only two of the early nineteenth-century books, as compared with five for *Captain Kidd,* has lately come into favor,

[1] In *From an Old Tunebook,* Lorenz Publishing Co., 1971.

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appearing in a number of recent hymnals, as well as in several recordings. (See Table A.)

Let us examine the history of the two tunes, and the recent references to them, the forms in which they appear in collections old and new, and some others of the family of tunes to which they belong.

I. The Story of *Captain Kidd*

George Pullen Jackson, in his first book about the white spirituals, says,

> In *Captain Kidd* . . . we see clearly a parody of the song about the fabled pirate . . . The song here parodied begins 'My name is Captain Kidd as I sailed . . .'[2]

Later, Jackson went deeper into his search for the origin of the tune. He consulted Miss Anne Gilchrist, who was well acquainted with the field of English ballads; it was her opinion that the tune was much older than Captain Kidd's time. Jackson reports in *Down-East Spirituals:*

> Miss Gilchrist, who has studied this pattern carefully, writes me: 'I think the Captain Kidd tune, in its various forms including the Scottish *My Luve's in Germanie, Send Him Hame,* is really descended from the sixteenth-century tune to which *My luve is lyand seik, Send him joy* (a song title of the *Complaynt of Scotland,* 1549) would be sung. The tune *My Luve's in Germanie* has been used over and over again, and it is no wonder if, in 400 years' (postulated) use, it should be found in many variants of the original — for there must have been an original, the meter is so distinctive . . . The pious parody [in *Gude and Godlie Ballatis,* 1567] of the lost sixteenth-century secular song evidently substitutes a divine for an earthly lover.'[3]

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[2] George Pullen Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* (Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, Inc., 1964, c 1933 by the University of North Carolina Press), p. 169.

[3] George Pullen Jackson, *Down-East Spirituals and Others* (Locust Valley, N.Y.: J. J. Augustin Publisher, n/d), p. 260.

In another book, Jackson again quotes Gilchrist on the subject of *Captain Kidd:* "There were many other eighteenth-century songs built on this peculiar stanzaic plan, celebrating other notorious characters, Admiral Benbow, Jack (or Sam) Hall."[4]

Sigmund Spaeth also writes about the Captain Kidd ballad, saying that it belongs to a school representing

> the musical glorification of crime, but always with emphasis on the fact that justice has been or will be done. *Captain Kidd* closed with the admonition, 'Take warning now by me, and shun bad company, Lest you come to hell with me, for I must die.'[5]

No one knows quite how the ancient secular ballads like that of Captain Kidd were made over into hymn tunes, but many of them were, either note for note, or through folk transformation. The first American use of the tune I have been able to discover was in *The Christian Harmony,* published in Exeter, New Hampshire in 1805, where it was entitled *The Honor of the Hills* and set to a beautiful hymn of nine stanzas. Jackson overlooked this appearance (I am pleased to have made this scoop!) and cited a manuscript song collection in Maryland, 1800-1830, as the oldest occurrence.[6]

Spaeth also refers to the hymn tune made from the Captain Kidd ballad:

> Billy Walker (editor of *The Southern Harmony*) . . . gave a religious atmosphere to the old tune of *Captain Kidd* after it had been fitted by some camp meeting singer with the words 'Through all the world below' . . . describing the natural beauties of the Appalachian wilderness in terms of divine creation. It is still a popular hymn in the South.[7]

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[4] *Spiritual Folksongs of Early America,* p. 159.

[5] Sigmund Spaeth, *A History of Popular Music in America* (New York: Random House, c 1948), p. 243.

[6] Jackson, *Spiritual Folk-Songs,* p. 160.

[7] Spaeth, *Popular Music in America,* p. 75.

II. The Story of *Wondrous Love*

The tune *Wondrous Love* is the object of praise from several writers: John Powell, in *Twelve Folk Hymns*, says, "It would be hard to find a more moving expression of faith, devotion, and triumph than this noble hymn."[8]

In *Music in America, 1620-1865, Wondrous Love* is referred to as "one of the finest examples of a pentatonic folk melody."[9] (One questions whether this melody, like *Captain Kidd*, is not hexatonic rather than pentatonic.)

Annabel Morris Buchanan, eminent folklorist, writes that the melody of *Wondrous Love* has been familiar to her family for over a century; she quotes Anne Gilchrist in a statement that the poetic form of this verse goes back to sixteenth-century England.[10]

When we come to George Pullen Jackson's discussion of *Wondrous Love*, we find that he first comes out in an early book with a general statement that the "stanzaic form is that of the Captain Kidd ballad which has been widely sung and parodied since the beginning of the eighteenth century."[11] Note that he refers here, correctly, to the "stanzaic form." But on the jacket of *Folk Music of the United States*, Album 11[12] he writes, with Lomax, that the tune *Wondrous Love* is "a version of a very old

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[8] John Powell, *Twelve Folk Hymns* (Glen Rock, New Jersey: J. Fischer & Bro., 1934), No. 2.

[9] W. T. Marrocco and Harold Gleason, *Music in America, 1620-1865* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., c 1964), p. 246.

[10] Annabel Morris Buchanan, *Folk Hymns of America* (New York: J. Fischer & Bro., 1938), p. 12.

[11] George Pullen Jackson, *Spiritual Folksongs of Early America* (New York: Dover Publications. Reprint, 1964 [New York: J. J. Augustin, 1937]), p. 114.

[12] Library of Congress, 1943.

melodic [italics added] pattern best known by its association with the 250-year-old ballad about Captain Kidd."

This is not true: as we shall see, the *melodic* pattern of *Wondrous Love* and *Captain Kidd* are quite different, though the metric patterns are identical, and the forms as well as the rhythmic patterns are similar, though not identical. Moreover, there are many other melodies based on the same metric pattern, as Jackson himself points out. (See Table B.)

By the next year (1944) Jackson was expanding his statement of the melodic identity of the two tunes; in his essay *The Story of the Sacred Harp, 1844-1944*, he wrote,

> It may make the process of 'spiritualizing' the older worldly songs clearer if I give an example. Take *Wondrous Love* in *The Sacred Harp*, p. 159. Its tune [n.b.] and its stanzaic structure were borrowed from the worldly song about the famous pirate, Captain Kidd. The link between the two songs may be seen clearly if one sings the *Wondrous Love* tune to the following words:[13]
>
> My name was Robert Kidd when I sailed, when I sailed
> My name was Robert Kidd when I sailed,
> My name was Robert Kidd, God's laws I did forbid
> So wickedly I did when I sailed, when I sailed,
> So wickedly I did when I sailed.[14]
>
> The *Captain Kidd* tune was already a very old and widely sung melody when it was picked up nearly 250 years ago and associated with the tale of the wild pirate who was executed in England in 1701. There are several forms of the melody, all of which had nevertheless a clear family resemb-

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[13] But one may also sing these words to the other tunes based on this metrical pattern. See the incipits of Table B.

[14] George Pullen Jackson, *The Story of the Sacred Harp, 1844-1944*, in the facsimile of *The Sacred Harp*, 3rd edition, by B. F. White and E. J. King, 1859 (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, c 1968), p. vi.

lance. The *Wondrous Love* tune is one . . . *Wondrous Love* is probably not more than 125 years old.[14, 15]

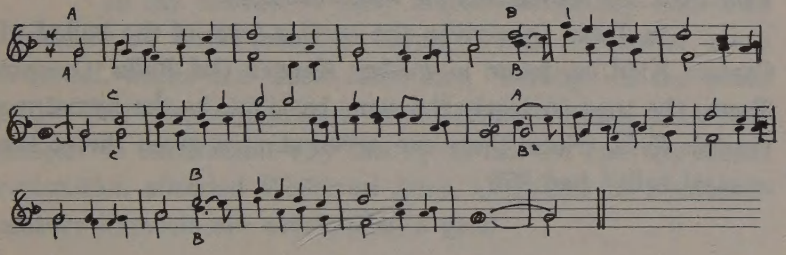
It is the heart of the above quotation which is reprinted as the basis of the explication given in *Companion to the Hymnal*, p. 429. Jackson's inference, though erroneous, is clear: that the melody of *Wondrous Love* is based on the Captain Kidd tune.

John Lomax picked up this same misconception in his *Folk Song U.S.A.:*

> In many cases these hymns were set to melodies taken right out of the tunebag of the folk-singer. Of all these folk-hymns *Wondrous Love* is perhaps the most beautiful. The words were composed by the Reverend Alex Means, a Methodist minister of Oxford, Ga., and for a tune the Reverend Doctor of Divinity chose the melody which had once moved the ballad about one of the wickedest of men, Captain Kidd.[16]

III. The Tunes Compared

Is there indeed no melodic similarity between *Wondrous Love* and *Captain Kidd?* The melodic form is similar, but not identical: the former is ABCAB, the latter ABCBB; each is hexatonic; the former has a larger range (Eb to F, as compared to Kidd's C to C). Here are the two tunes superimposed: *Wondrous Love* has up-stems, *Captain Kidd* down-stems.



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[15] Miss Gilchrist describes the ballad as "a sort of dying speech and testament." (Jackson, *Spiritual Folk Songs of Early America*, p. 160.)

[16] John A. Lomax, ed., *Folk Song U.S.A.* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, c 1947), p. 331.

IV. Variants of the Two Tunes

The differences in the various appearances of the tunes, some of which may be seen in the illustrations of Tables C and D, are incidental, and seldom affect the character of the tune. Harmonization varies from editor to editor, period to period: that in the *Cokesbury Hymnal* (1923) is romantic modern, disregarding all the delicately modal nuances (understandable, considering its date of issue) while that of the *Methodist Hymnal* of 1966 reverts with questionable effectiveness to the austere, archaic harmonies of the earliest books.

There is one instance in the nineteenth-century books which brings the two tunes closer together. This is the tune for *Wondrous Love* used in *Taylor's Plantation Melodies*, 1882, No. 124, as quoted in Jackson's *White and Negro Spirituals, Their Life Span and Kinship*, p. xliii. This tune, which resembles the ubiquitous tune *Solemn Thought* (illustrated in Table B), also closely resembles *Captain Kidd.* It is the only time uncovered by this writer when a tune really based on the *Captain Kidd* tune is used in connection with the words of *Wondrous Love.* (See Table C.) Notice also in Table C the instance when another tune is used with the *Wondrous Love* words: this is usually known as *Saints Bound for Heaven,* and is used in the *Primitive Baptist Hymn and Tune Book* as a second tune for *Wondrous Love.*

In Table D is given the secular form of the ballad of Captain Kidd, as found in *Father Kemp's Old Folks Concert Tunes;* the tune is clearly the same basic one as the hymntune *Captain Kidd.* (Note: there are seven stanzas given there; the original ballad had 25!)

V. Variations in the Text of the Two Hymns

Somewhat more surprising are the variations of text from one collection to another. *Wondrous Love* has only one stanza in *The Southern Harmony* (this was a common practice among the tunebooks of the period, though *Southern Harmony* is

often more generous with stanzas than many of them) but *Social and Campmeeting Songs for the Pious* and the Primitive Baptist book have a half dozen and *Folk Song U.S.A.* has four. Strangely, the recent *Methodist Hymnal* uses only two, and those two overlap. Why not more, when almost all the available stanzas have a grandeur which is most impressive? (See Table E.)

As for *Captain Kidd,* we find here also a variety in the choice of stanzas. (See Table F.) There is only one verse given in *Missouri Harmony; Southern Harmony* and *The Supplement to Kentucky Harmony* each give the same four; *Columbian Harmony* gives four, three of which are like those of the preceding titles. These are all about the beauties of nature as it praises God. In *The Christian Harmony,* however, there are nine stanzas, four of which are found in other appearances, but the others give a new slant to the whole hymn, making the hills the hero of the poem. Moses on Mt. Sinai, Elijah and Mt. Carmel, Mt. Zion, and Calvary, each is given a verse, and the final stanza opens, *Since the hills are honored thus* and makes the singer from the mountains aware of "the honor of the hills." And this is the title of the tune in *Christian Harmony,* which was published in New Hampshire two decades before the next-earliest appearance of the tune; thus it is not the southern Appalachians but the New England mountains which inspired this ode to nature.

In my studies of early nineteenth-century American tunebooks, I have found no hymn which I consider more beautiful, words and music alike, than "Through all the world below, God is seen all around" with its tune *Captain Kidd.* It is difficult to understand why this hymn has not had the recent recognition afforded *Wondrous Love.* Compilers of twentieth-century hymnals are overlooking a gem!

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Old Harp Singing. Folkways FP 56.

Sing to the Lord. Robert Shaw Chorale. RCA Victor LM 2942.

What Wondrous Love. Robert Shaw Chorale. RCA Victor LM 2403.

TABLE A

SOME TUNEBOOKS, RECORDINGS, AND HYMNALS OLD AND NEW WHICH CONTAIN *WONDROUS LOVE* or *CAPTAIN KIDD*

I. *Captain Kidd* (also entitled *Kidd, Kidd's Lament, Honor to the Hills,* or *Green Meddow*)

1805 The Christian Harmony (New Hampshire)
1825 Supplement to The Kentucky Harmony
1825 Columbian Harmony
1829 The Missouri Harmony
1835 The Southern Harmony
1874 Father Kemp's Old Folks Concert Tunes (secular)
Sing to the Lord, Robert Shaw Chorale, RCA Victor LM 2942

II. *Wondrous Love*

1835 Social and Campmeeting Songs for the Pious (words only)
1835 The Southern Harmony
1878 Olive Leaf
1882 Taylor's Plantation Melodies
1902 Primitive Baptist Hymn and Tune Book (two tunes: one is elsewhere set to "Our bondage it shall end" and the tune is called *Saints Bound for Heaven.*)
1913 Good Old Songs
1923 The Cokesbury Hymnal
1956 The Youth Hymnary (Faith and Life Press, Newton, Kans.)
1962 Hymns and Songs for Church Schools (Augsburg)
1966 The Methodist Hymnal
1967 The Cambridge Hymnal (English)
1968 Hymns of Grace (Primitive Baptist Foundation, Boswell, Ga.)
1968 Worship and Hymns for All Occasions (Westminster Press)
1969 Hymns and Songs, a Supplement to the Methodist Hymn Book
1970 Hymnbook for Christian Worship (Bethany Press)
1970 Sing! (Fortress Press)

Folk Music of the United States. Lomax and Jackson. Library of Congress, 1943. Album 11.

Hymns and Carols. Summers. Folkways FP 61

Old Harp Singing. Folkways FP 56

What Wondrous Love. Robert Shaw Chorale. RCA Victor LM 2403

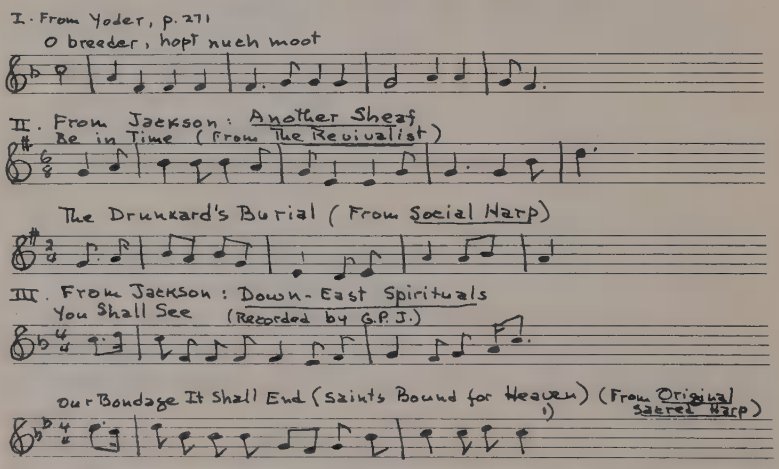
Note that *The Southern Harmony* is the only collection listed above which contains both tunes.

TABLE B

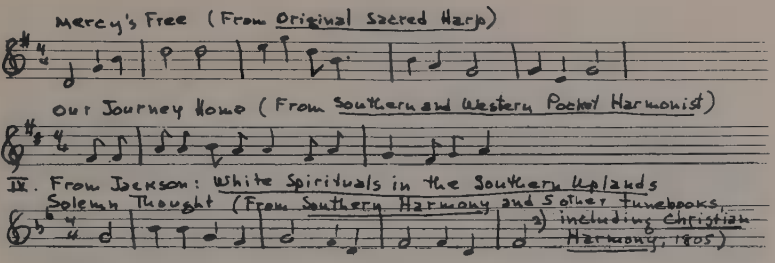
OTHER HYMN TUNES BASED ON THE CAPTAIN KIDD METRIC PATTERN

George Pullen Jackson lists, in his various books analyzing early American spirituals, a number of tunes based on a metrical pattern identical or similar to that of *Captain Kidd.* They are listed here chiefly for the purpose of proving the main thesis of this paper: that the pattern was popular, but that it was solely a *metric* pattern and not a *melodic* pattern, and that the melodies of the hymn tunes *Wondrous Love* and *Captain Kidd* must not be identified with each other; they are different tunes. If there was a common source, it is so old that we have no certain knowledge of it. The *Companion to the Hymnal* and other commentaries should thus clarify their comments as to the source of *Wondrous Love.*

Incipits of Other Tunes with the Same or Similar Metrical Pattern as *Wondrous Love* and *Captain Kidd*


I. From Yoder, p. 271
O breeder, hopt nuch moot
II. From Jackson: Another Sheaf
Be in Time (From The Revivalist)
The Drunkard's Burial (From Social Harp)
III. From Jackson: Down-East Spirituals
You Shall See (Recorded by G.P.J.)
Our Bondage It Shall End (Saints Bound for Heaven) (From Original Sacred Harp)

[1] This tune is used for *Wondrous Love* in the *Primitive Baptist Hymn and Tune Book.*


Mercy's Free (From Original Sacred Harp)
Our Journey Home (From Southern and Western Pocket Harmonist)
IV. From Jackson: White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands
Solemn Thought (From Southern Harmony and 5 other tunebooks, including Christian Harmony, 1805)

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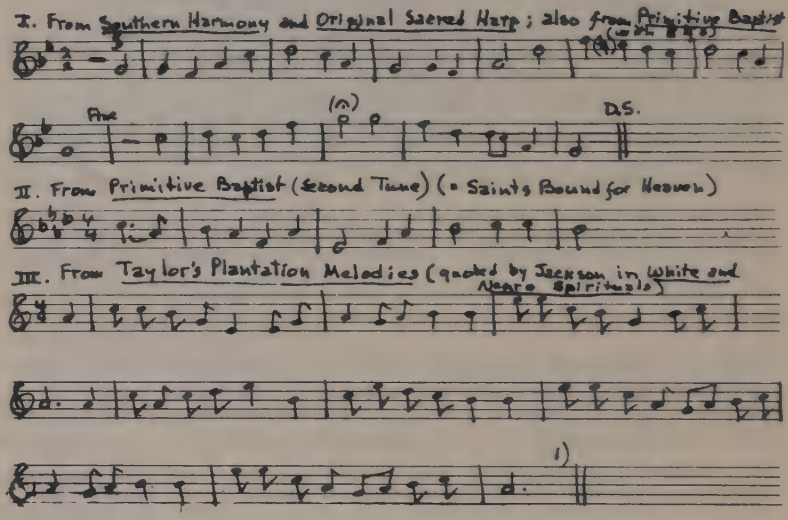
[2] This tune is close in melodic outline to *Captain Kidd.* It is used with the Wondrous Love text in *Taylor's Plantation Melodies.*

TABLE C
VARIANT TUNES FOR *WONDROUS LOVE*


I. From Southern Harmony and Original Sacred Harp; also from Primitive Baptist
Fine
D.S.
II. From Primitive Baptist (Second Tune) (= Saints Bound for Heaven)
III. From Taylor's Plantation Melodies (quoted by Jackson in White and Negro Spirituals)

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[1] Note that this tune is a variant of *Captain Kidd* — not of *Wondrous Love* — and is the only discovered nineteenth-century confusion of the two tunes. It also resembles *Solemn Thought* (q.v.).

TABLE D
VARIANTS OF THE TUNE OF *CAPTAIN KIDD*

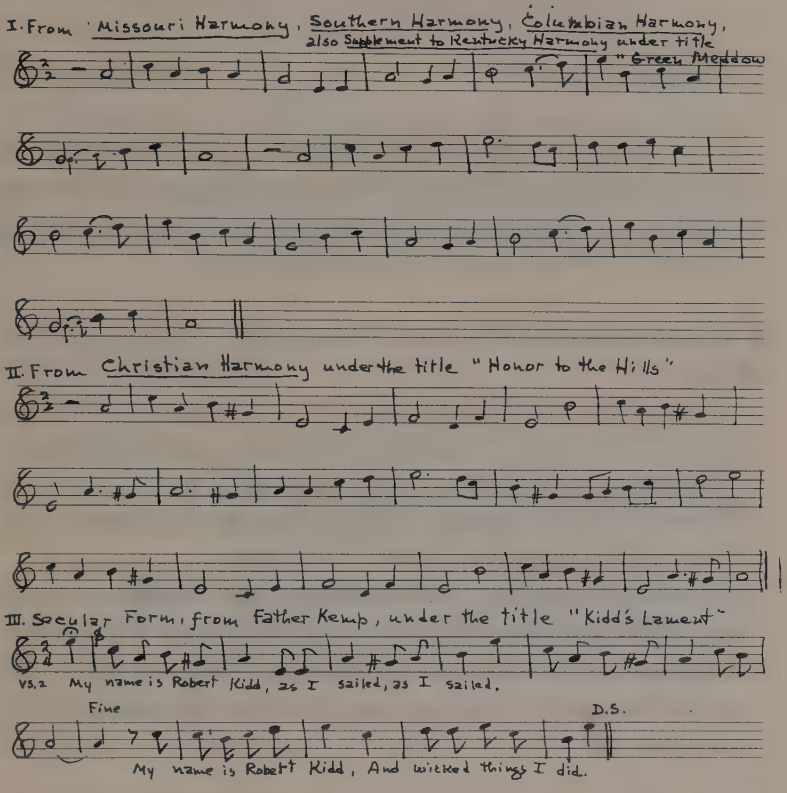
I. From Missouri Harmony, Southern Harmony, Columbian Harmony, also Supplement to Kentucky Harmony under title "Green Meddow"
II. From Christian Harmony under the title "Honor to the Hills"
III. Secular Form, from Father Kemp, under the title "Kidd's Lament"
Vs. 2 My name is Robert Kidd, as I sailed, as I sailed,
Fine
D.S.
My name is Robert Kidd, And wicked things I did.

TABLE E

VARIANT TEXTS TO *WONDROUS LOVE**

1. All appearances

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What wondrous love is this, O my soul! What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul, to bear the dreadful curse for my soul.

In *Primitive Baptist Hymn and Tune Book*, verses 2-5 are as follows:

2. When I was sinking down beneath God's righteous frown / Christ laid aside his crown for my soul.
3. To God and to the Lamb I will sing, and to the great I AM / While millions join the theme, I will sing.
4. Ye sons of Zion's King, join the praise, with hearts and voices sing / And strike each tuneful string in his praise.
5. And when to that bright world we arrive, When to that world we go, free from all pain and woe, We'll join the happy throng and sing on.

In *Social and Campmeeting Songs for the Pious:*

3. Ye winged seraphs, fly, bear the news, Ye winged seraphs fly like comets through the sky / Fill vast eternity with the news.
6. And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on / And when from death I'm free / I'll sing and joyful be / And through eternity I'll sing on.

Methodist Hymnal of 1966, stanza 2:

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, That caused the Lord of life / To lay aside his crown for my soul.

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TABLE F

VARIANT TEXTS TO *CAPTAIN KIDD*

1. All appearances

Through all the world below God is seen all around, Search hills and valleys through There he's found. The growing of the corn / The lily and the thorn / The pleasant and forlorn / all declare God is there / In meadows dressed in green / There he's seen.

Columbian Harmony

2. See springing waters rise / Fountains flow, rivers run/ The mist that veils the sky Hides the sun; / Then down the rain doth roar / And beat upon the shore / And all praise in their ways / The God who ne'er declines / His designs.

3. The sun with all his rays / Speaks of God as he flies; / The comet in her blaze, God she cries. / The shining of the stars / The moon when she appears / His awful name declares; See them fly through the sky / And join the solemn sound / All around. /

4. Not India's hills of gold / Where the wonders are told / Nor zephyrs strong and bold / Can unfold / The mountain Calvary / Where Christ our Lord did die. / Hark, hear the Savior cry / Mountains quake, heavens shake, / Christ, called to heaven's host / Left their coast.

Southern Harmony

3. The sun, to my surprise / Speaks of God as he flies / The comets in their blaze / Give him praise; / The shining of the stars / The moon as it appears / His sacred name declares / See them shine, all divine! / The shades in silence prove / God's above.

4. Then let my station be / Here on earth, as I see / The sacred One in Three / All agree; / Through all the world is made / The forest and the glade / Nor let me be afraid / Though I dwell on the hill / Since nature's works declare / God is there.

In *Christian Harmony,* verses 3-8 are about the hills: Mount Sinai, Calvary, Mt. Zion, and Mt. Carmel. Verse 9:

Since the hills are honored thus by our Lord in his course / Let them not by us be called a curse / Forbid it, mighty King, but rather let us sing / While hills and vallies ring; echoes fly through the sky / And heaven hears the sound from the ground.

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